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THE GUARDIAN GUIDE TO BAY AREA NIGHTLIFE AND GLAMOUR
SUMMER 2010 • NUMBER 13



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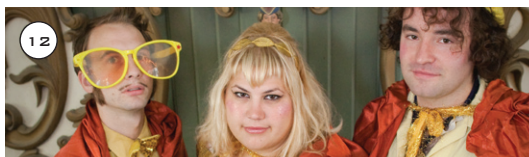
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For our incredibly lucky 13th issue of Scene, we wanted to focus on some of the live style and sounds of the Bay. As nightlife, fashion, music, and movement link themselves together more and more in real time, we wanted to capture some of the lively energy being generated in the clubs, on the streets, and on the dance floors. It's time to turn it up and turn it out for summer hotness. (Marke B.)

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY MIRISSA NEFF
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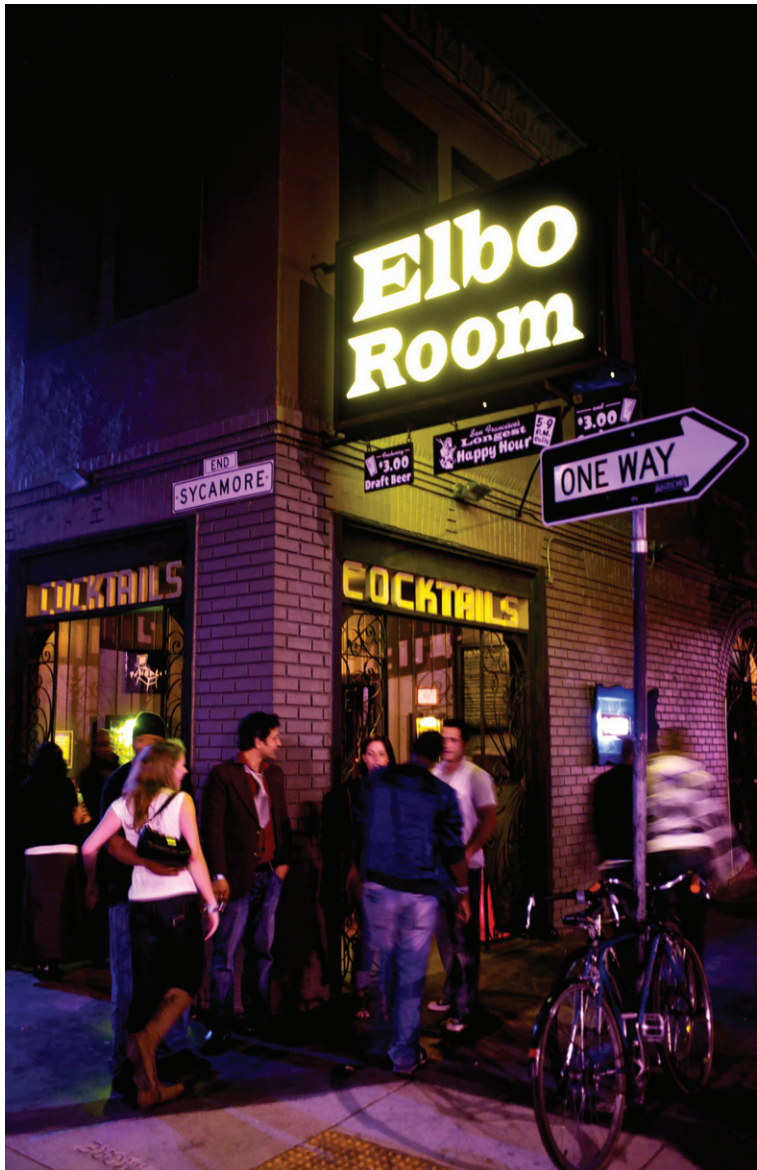
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Afrolicious: TASTY AS FUNK

BY MARKE B.

PHOTOS BY JOHN SNYDER AND DAMIEN MILLER

In the past decade, funk has reemerged as the worldwide language of “getting down,” breezily incorporating local sounds from Africa, South America, Asia, and beyond into a bubbly stew of native expression that techno tended to bulldoze.

For three years now, our most dazzling entry into the global funk-a-thon has been Afrolicious (afroliciousoriginal.blogspot.com), lighting up the Elbo Room every Thursday night with satisfied smiles and a mind-bending array of soulful styles.

The two DJ brothers behind Afrolicious, Pleasuremaker and Señor Oz, are on a roll lately, traveling to New York, Japan, and Austin for the SXSW festival. Their sets incorporate sounds from James Brown to Zombie Disco Squad, Jali Bakary Conteh to Una Mas Trio, old school house and rollerskate jams to newer afrobeat and cumbia.

There’s always a live element to their appearances — including main drummers, J.Elrod, B.Lee, Enrique, Diamond, guest vocalist Iggy Mon, and occasional Malian ngoni or Brazilian pandeiro. Pleasuremaker even heads up his own full-on live funk band — called the Pleasuremaker Band, natch — that regularly performs at the parties and has an album coming out later this year.

“Spontaneity is central factor in the party,” Pleasuremaker tells me. “Oz and myself have never planned a set beforehand or got too set on playing a certain thing at a certain time. We keep it loose.” Looseness is key, yet still the sets the Afro-boys come up with are stunningly coherent and act as a kind of aural map of the world. “We’re connecting the dots from funk, blues, and jazz to afrobeat, Latin, and new electronic sounds,” Oz says. “We run the gamut. We make ‘em dance. We don’t stand still.” Afro-really! **SFBG**

AFROLICIOUS Thursdays, 9:30 p.m., \$7. Elbo Room, 647 Valencia, SF. www.elbo.com



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Raising the bar

Two recent openings set new cocktail standards

Text and Photos By Virginia Miller

Two new bars debuted at the end of May, quietly ushering in what I hope might be a new trend: mellow, sophisticated spaces creating expertly crafted cocktails that embrace the classic and celebrate the contemporary. Both come without attitude, exclusivity, and — dare I say it? — mobs of douche-y crowds turning an otherwise fabulous bar into a place to be avoided unless it's 5 p.m. on Tuesday. I want to see these bars thrive but hope they won't lose their appeal as places you can linger peacefully over a fine drink with like minds.

BURRITT ROOM

If I could imagine a dream "speakeasy," it would be one tucked away from the masses (maybe in the second floor of a hotel), rich with atmosphere (brick walls, chandeliers, a piano, black and red accents on velvet stools, couches, pillows), a reasonably sized cocktail menu (say, 18 rotating cocktails?), and a complete lack of pretension. Enter Burritt Room, which quietly opened upstairs in the Crescent Hotel in the shadow of the Stockton Tunnel.

Master bartender Kevin Diedrich, whose experience ranges from East (PDT and Clover Club) to West (Clock Bar and Bourbon & Branch), sets the welcoming tone, appealing to cocktail aficionados and beer-sippers alike. There are other fine bartenders on board here, among them Kelli Bratvold (Bourbon & Branch, Rickhouse). You might want to ask for Bratvold and Diedrich's off-menu creation, Black Rose, an unusual mix of Bols Genever and Junipero gin with Creme de Yvette, rosewater, blackberry simple syrup, splash of Maraschino liqueur, and a rose-pepper tincture.

Pull up to the bar or get cozy on a red couch with a layered Evening Shade: cognac, Grand Marnier, lemon, orgeat, peach bitters. I'm impressed with the seemingly light (it sneaks up on you), refreshing Hitachino Sour, made of bourbon, orange marmalade, lemon, sugar, orange bitters, topped with Hitachino White beer. A Champagne Julep comes beautifully frosty in a proper julep cup, bourbon intriguingly switched out for sparkling wine and cognac. I will always prefer a traditional julep, but this is a pleasing change of pace.

A spirituous, boozy Kentucky Stinger has a hefty hunk of Kold Draft ice, allowing the punch of rye and cognac to stay strong, the drink accented with Amaro, dashes of Angostura and chocolate bitters, and a crème de menthe rinse apparent on the minty finish. End an evening here with the awesome Smoked Peach (scotch, sherry, lemon, muddled peaches) and just try not to fall in love with this place.

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Comstock Saloon occupies a beautiful space in a 1907 building on the Barbary Coast trail, restored to the glories of its past with an antique mahogany bar, Victorian furniture, faux wood-burning stove, upright piano, and the bar's original spittoon. Owners Jeff Hollinger (author of *The Art of the Bar*) and Jonny Raglin both came from Absinthe, bringing a mastery of cocktail classics. Here you'll find straight-up classics, the kind found in pages of *The Savoy Cocktail Book* or Charles H. Baker's *Gentleman's Companion*. A first edition of the Baker's book is displayed in glassed-in shelves lining the wall along with other historical cocktail memorabilia: a mini Museum of the American Cocktail, if you will.

Besides perfect Sazeracs and South Side cocktails, Comstock crafts other lesser-known classics, like the Hop Toad, with Jamaican rum, apricot brandy, lime and bitters. Though Comstock, like Burritt, is an ideal place for lingering on plush Victorian couches or in wood booths, it is also much more than a bar. It's a restaurant with full menu, offering lunch and dinner from chef Carlo Espinas, formerly of Piccino Cafe. At first glance, a beef shank with bone marrow pot-pie may look like a store-bought pot-pie, but sink your fork into the flaky crust and meaty, heartwarming interior and you'll taste the love.

A welcome addition to North Beach, this comfortable saloon is also a loving tribute to San Francisco cocktails popular back in our wilder days.

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scrapers

rock the block

PHOTOS BY MATTHEW REAMER
WORDS BY MARKE B.

There's a truly inspiring movement going on in Oakland. Scraper bikes — brightly colored, their spokes woven with foil and often decorated with subverted corporate logos — are weaving through the streets. Started by the young and motivated Tyrone Stevenson Jr., a.k.a. Baybe Champ, the Scraper Bike King, the scraper bike movement aims to, in Tyrone's words, "make a change in young people's lives, 'cause it's getting them

away from the negative things that Oakland has to offer: gangs, drugs, and violence. Youth that's involved with the Scraper Bike Movement are dedicated and passionate about rebuilding our community by fixing and riding our bikes."

Tyrone requires that Scraper Bike Team members maintain a 3.0 grade point average, reside in Oakland, and always ride single file. After videos of Tyrone's work started popping

up a couple years ago on YouTube, "more and more kids in my community wanted a Scraper Bike. I had all the kids come to my house and work on bikes," he told us. He's currently working toward starting up a shop. "We need a location in our neighborhood so we can come and fix on our bikes and build the Scraper Bike Team."

Check out originalscraperbikes.blogspot.com for more.







Interview by Johnny Ray Huston
Photography by Alexander Warnow Photography

If I'm going to stay up late and go as deep as I can into the night, so far that I'm just about lost and in trouble, I want the sounds of Shannon and the Clams (www.shannonandtheclams.com) with me. The Oakland group's album *I Wanna Go Home* (1-2-3-4-Go! Records) is packed with songs that have been there and will shine a light to lead you back into the day, while letting you have a sip or two and an adventure or three along the way. This is rock 'n' roll music, electric-charged by bassist Shannon Shaw's wild wonder of a voice, guitarist Cody Lambert's flair for classic crooning and crying, and drummer Ian Amberson's fierce reliability. See Shannon and the Clams live. You will believe.

SFBG Shannon, when did you start to sing for fun? What singers did you love as a kid?

Shannon Shaw I have been making up songs since the ripe age of two. But the first song I remember in full came about because I was cast off to spend time in my room for being bad. There I formed a rage cage (rage cage: an explosion of anger you can't escape from) and sang a song that lasted the duration of my time out. The lyrics were something like, "I'm really a princess, and my mom doesn't know because she's evil, and I'm a princess, and my grandma is my real mom who is a queen and she loves me and lives in a castle. My castle. I'm a princess, where's my castle?" Very sophisticated, eh? I think I was fourish at the time. My favorite singers growing up were definitely Roy Orbison, Kermit the Frog, the mouse girl from *An American Tale*, Mrs. Brisby from *The Secret of NIMH*, Eric Burdon, George Strait, Les Claypool, Ronnie Spector, Shelley Fabares, the Supremes, and Connie Francis.

SFBG What is your favorite item of clothing right now?

Cody Blanchard A rope belt.

SS A ripped-up white Adam Ant V-neck T-shirt that Seth of Hunx and the Punkettes gave me. While I was on tour with them in France, I saw him wearing it one day and said, "I love Adam Ant, I need your shirt." He took it off his back and gave it to me. What a good friend! He stood there, nearly naked as a jaybird, to give me the shirt of my dreams. I wear it every Friday night if you ever wanna see it.

SFBG Where do you like to go out at night?

CB I love movie theaters so much. My favorite thing

is when a theater plays an old movie. I've seen *Blade Runner*, *El Topo*, *The Thing*, *Jurassic Park*, *Maximum Overdrive*, and a bunch of other stuff. I also love to go to the video store. It's way more fun than Netflix because it's impulsive. Or I love to be around a BBQ or a campfire — if there can be fireworks too, then it's my No. 1 dream. Or bicycling through the empty night. Or being in a car or a train going across the country, staring out the window..

SS If I had my choice, I would hang out in a wooded area by some railroad tracks with a boombox and a bike. I used to hang out at this old Sunsweet prune factory by train tracks in a deserted part of downtown Napa. There was a little campfire area nearby that was a perfect place to sip on a Friday night sneaky flask.

SFBG Rollercoasters or haunted houses?

Ian Amberson Haunted houses. Our favorite is in the Enchanted Forest theme park in Salem, Ore. It has lots of creepy automatons and surprisingly scary uses of compressed air to scare the crap out of ya.

SFBG Hot dogs or hamburgers?

SS Hamdoggers.

IA The process leading up to both is disgusting, but I prefer a well-cooked brat over a patty of beef. Hot dogs are so much more mysterious and have a pleasant snap to them.

CB Hamburger, no contest. Although Pink's Hot Dogs in L.A. makes me think twice about that statement. Vegetarian hot dogs taste like a garbage can.

SFBG 45 record parties or drive-in double features?

SS Drive-in! I've never been to one. Somebody wanna gimme a ride?

CB Drive-in for sure. I go to record parties all the time, but drive-ins are so rare these days. The drive-in is the ultimate movie experience. You're outside in the night and you can do whatever you want in your car. I saw *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* at a drive-in when it came out. I don't think I've been to one since. **SFBG**

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Drawing by Cecile Xantho Young

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Fat Freddy's Drop Turns On, Tunes In

INTERVIEW BY MIRISSA NEFF PHOTO BY KERRY BROWN

Considering the tripped-out journeys of its songs, it comes as no surprise that Fat Freddy's Drop (www.fatfreddysdrop.com) was born of psychedelic experimentations. A top seller in its native New Zealand, FFD focuses on maintaining a stellar groove — you'd be hard-pressed to find a Fat Freddy track clocking in at less than six minutes. The seven-member band dropped into town last fall to play to a ravenous, sold-out Independent crowd. While its devoted kiwi fanbase is regularly treated to FFD's funkafied, reggae-infused performances, the Independent show was the first U.S. appearance since a one-off back in 2004. With more SF shows this time around, it seems like the septet is really gaining traction on this side of the Pacific. Saxophonist Chopper Reeds gave us the lowdown on the Drop.

SFBG *What's the name Fat Freddy's Drop about?*

CHOPPER REEDS We're probably stepping all over Bay Area counterculture royalty here but, as you probably know, Fat Freddy was one of the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers. And he had a cat — a feline of somewhat loose morals. The cat

had a cult following here in Wellington among a party-loving crowd. So we bastardized his name and embraced his vibe.

SFBG *What are you looking forward to on this tour?*

CR Some proper Mexican food. And looking for records. Oh, and playing for our U.S. friends. The reaction to our first West Coast gigs was fantastic. The band is in great form, so I think we'll have something fresh for people to see.

SFBG *How have influences from the western hemisphere — dub, soul, funk — filtered into your music? And how did singer Joe Dukie develop his unique vocal style?*

CR Filter is the right word. We can only really access that music through records or if we get a chance to see someone live when we're traveling. We're not purists — we're seven rabid fan boys all diggin' on some Al Green, Delroy Wilson, Prince, or Fela Kuti and trying to work out how we can cop that vibe rather than copy the notes. As for Dukie, well I can't answer for him. All I can say is, he is a deep pool. By that I mean he draws out his lyrics in a very considered and powerful way.

SFBG *What about the mix of New Zealand-Pacific Islander backgrounds in the group and how that plays out in the music?*

CR We've got one Samoan, three Maori, and three European New Zealanders. But our outlook is pretty internationalist, so we're prepared to steal musical influences from anywhere.

SFBG To me the music of Fat Freddy's Drop drips of summer. Is that just the general vibe of New Zealand, or is it particular to the group?

CR I like to think that the music can transport you. New Zealand can be a pretty grim place in winter, and the country's thoughts are very much on sunshine and warmth. Themes of family, love, and renewal are in all music. That sounds like a good summer to me. **SFBG**

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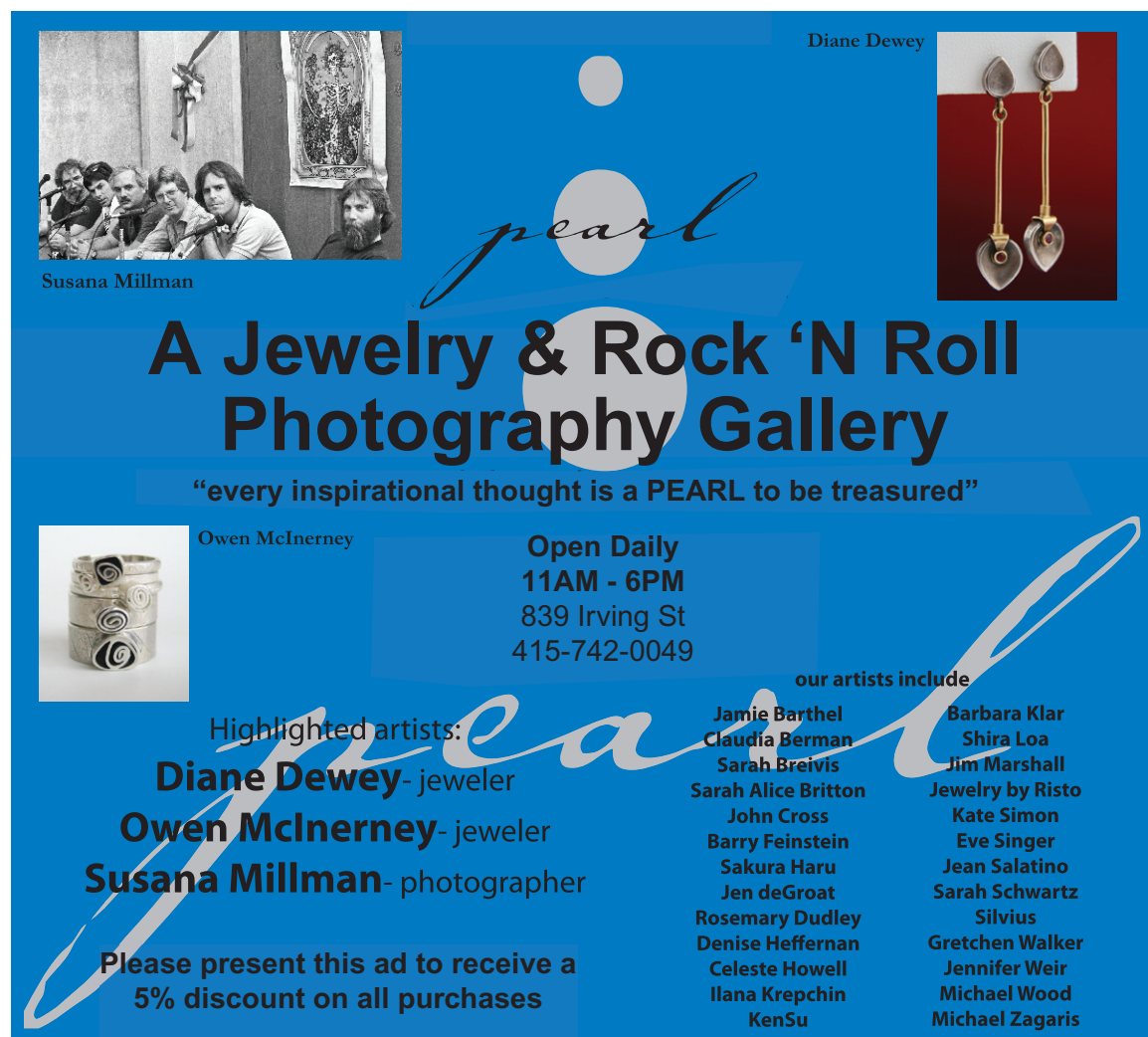
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meklit in full

Interview and photos: Mirissa Neff

Born in Ethiopia and raised in the U.S., songstress Meklit Hadero's (www.meklithadero.com) musical endeavors span latitudes and genres. But there's also a timeless quality to her warmth and soulfulness that's reminiscent of archetypes like Nina Simone and Billie Holiday. A former director of the Mission's Red Poppy Art House, her recent debut album *On A Day Like This* was heavily influenced by her experiences as an integral part of the Mission scene. In May an exuberant crowd celebrated the release of Meklit's CD at Bimbo's, and soon afterward we got to spend an afternoon with her while roaming the hills of West Marin.

SFBG *Have you always been a musician?*

MEKLIT HADERO Music has always been essential. I'd always wanted to do it, but didn't know how to give myself the space. Then I made a commitment to develop in public ... nothing compares to the growth that happens through performance. People like to see other people being free.

SFBG *I noticed your willingness to share that vulnerability at your CD release party, that you didn't put on airs like "it's showtime!" There was a moment between songs where there was huge applause and you had to take a couple of extra breaths because of all the emotion. It was really beautiful.*

MH I had such a great time at that show. There was so much love in that room.

SFBG *Any interesting cover songs on the horizon?*

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hadero bloom



MH I can't tell you exactly what my plans are because part of the fun is when covers surprise people. I've been relatively slow to add covers into my sets, but there will be more. Right now I'm learning a traditional Ethiopian folk song called "I Like Your Afro" [laughs]. Actually, the lyrics are just gorgeous.

SFBG And you have a Stern Grove show coming up?

MH Which is such a dream! I'm so excited about that. Stern Grove is one of the best things about being here in the summer ... going early, picking nasturtiums for the salad ...

SFBG Of course ... you're the flower lady! You always have flowers in your hair. Any other favorite flowers?

MH Well one of the favorite categories is "flowers that are good for your hair." Speaking of which, the other day at the Poppy — this resident artist named Fernando Diaz has a cat named Eskimo that he brings everywhere in a sling like a baby. I was holding Eskimo and he climbed up my shoulder, climbed onto my afro, traversed my afro to the other side, and began furiously attacking my flower. It was so funny. Anyway, flat flowers are good or flowers with a short cone. Gardenias are lovely but hard to attach. I don't know how Billie Holiday did it. **SFBG**

MEKLIT HADERO AT THE STERN GROVE FESTIVAL

Aug. 1, 2 p.m., free. Stern Grove, 19th Ave. and Sloat, SF. www.sterngrove.org



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Fri/25, 9 p.m., \$10. Blue Macaw, 2565 Mission, SF. www.myspace.com/kafanabalkan

SOFT METALS

Portland, Ore., vintage synth duo Ian Hixx and Patricia Fupurse play dark, glassy sounds in the wave and Italo disco tradition, sparking dance floor joy. Catch them with the awesome "true electro East Bay acid thugs" crew, Party Effects.

Fri/25, 10 p.m., \$5. Li Po, 916 Grant, SF. www.myspace.com/softmetals

FAREWELL, HOUSE OF SHIELDS

After 102 years, the beloved bar that played host to an array of fun dance parties and concerts is closing. Arg, please don't let it become a bad sports bar! Come have a drink and celebrate the wonderfully sordid history of this sure-to-be-missed joint.

Sat/26, 8 p.m., free. House of Shields, 39 New Montgomery, SF. www.houseofshields.com

DAM FUNK

If you haven't tuned in to this Angelino master of Princely funk

— or at least tripped out once to the deconstructed '80s synth wonder of his recent *Toeachizown* — then you crazy. Live, he's even better, and will be joined by lovely-poppy Nite Jewel. (They'll both join forces for a Nit Funk performance as well.) DJ Pickpocket presides.

July 1, 9 p.m., \$15 advance. Mezzanine, 444 Jessie, SF. www.mezzaninesf.com

SINGULAR SENSATION

Let's get sweaty! Far-too-hip Los Angeles dance instructor Ryan Heffington is coming to town to Olivia Newton John on the dance floor. Think Richard Simmons without the peek-a-boo shorts and closet. Fauxnique and Husband host, DJs Pee Play and Stanley Frank lube up the leg-warmers.

July 1, 10 p.m., \$7. Paradise Lounge, 1501 Folsom, SF. www.paradisesf.com

STOMPY + SUNSET

An annual July Fourth weekend tradition, this 12-hour extravaganza on the patio of Café Cocomo brings together some of the best names in funky house and techno in town. This year, they're adding legendary deep house pioneer Kerri "Kaoz" Chandler as headliner. Could it get any better? Hell yeah, there's a BBQ, too.

July 4, 2 p.m., \$10-\$20. Café Cocomo, 650 Indiana, SF. www.pacificsound.net **SFBG**



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